



U.S. Small Business Administration

SANTA ANA DISTRICT OFFICE

News Release

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Dennis J. Thurston Selected as 2017 Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year

*Honoree reflects patriotism for the sacrifice of those who have worn the uniform
and the importance of small businesses in the U.S. economy*

SANTA ANA, Calif. - The U.S. Small Business Administration, Santa Ana District Office has selected Dennis J. Thurston, Supplier Diversity Manager at Southern California Edison (SCE), as the 2017 Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year. Thurston resides in Laguna Niguel and was nominated for this award by Cole Woodman, Chairman of Veterans In Business Network.

Thurston is devoted to the success and advancement of Veterans in business; not only in his professional capacity at SCE, but also in his personal life. He devotes countless off-duty hours to support veteran businesses, veteran service organizations, Service Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses and other vet-friendly outreach programs. In addition to managing and directing nearly \$100 million worth of contracts to Service Disabled Veteran Businesses here in California, he also works tirelessly to support the entire veteran business community.

Thurston's legislative actions have helped to clarify the Veterans Business Tax Exemptions that would allow all California veterans to receive a free business license saving multiple businesses thousands of dollars. Through legislation or grassroots outreach efforts, Mr. Thurston is a steadfast supporter of our "Vetrepreneurs."

Devoted to supporting California's "General Order 156", Thurston is responsible at SCE for ensuring the compliance of this directive. The GO 156 dictates that investor-owned utilities shall maintain a supplier diversity program and establish goals for doing business with small, women, minority, Disabled Veteran and LGBT owned businesses. As a direct result of his efforts, there have been increased opportunities for veterans. SCE has increased their contract spending with veteran businesses from \$41 million in 2012 to over \$92 million in 2015 (a 124% increase). This increase can be attributed to Thurston's outreach, networking and training efforts for veteran owned businesses.

Thurston's dedication reflects patriotism for both the sacrifice of those who have worn the uniform, and the importance of small businesses in the U.S. economy. He will be recognized and receive his award as 2017 Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year at the local Small Business Week Awards program which will be held Friday, June 9 from 10:30 a.m. to approximately 2:00 p.m. at the Disneyland Hotel

Grand Ballroom. The event is being hosted by the Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. For more information on the event or to register, email events@ochcc.com or call 714-953-4289.

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About Small Business Week

Every year since 1963, the President of the United States has issued a proclamation announcing National Small Business Week, which recognizes the critical contributions of America's entrepreneurs and small business owners. More than half of Americans either own or work for a small business, and they create about two out of every three new jobs in the U.S. each year. As part of National Small Business Week, the agency takes the opportunity to highlight the impact of outstanding entrepreneurs, small business owners and others at local events around the country. Every day, these individuals are working to grow small businesses, create 21st century jobs, drive innovation, and increase America's global competitiveness. For more information, please visit www.sba.gov/nsbw/nsbw.